

**THE GENERA *NATHRIUS* BRÈTHES AND *MOLORCHUS* F.
(COL.: CERAMBICIDAE) IN GREAT BRITAIN**

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Introduction

THESE three species, unlike other British Longhorn beetles, are characterised by having abbreviated or truncated elytra; one of them, *Nathrius*, causes great depredations in a variety of manufactured articles, wattle fencing and wicker furniture. The two *Molorchus* species with their exposed wings, long antennae apart, resemble superficially a sawfly in overall appearance.

Symbols in use are the Brownean "typomap" (Kaufmann, 1989); italicised letters represent widespread localities; those in brackets are of doubtful or unconfirmed records; a dagger (†) stands for an importation.

Nathrius brevipennis Muls.

Distributed meagrely over unconnected regions, often in counties with easy access to ports. Many records are of specimens infesting shipped-in finished goods from the Continent.

ENGLAND: BK CB CH DT EK ES GE L† LR MX MY SD† SH SL† SR WO WW† WY†.

SCOTLAND: LA†.

IRELAND: (NK†).

For many years this tiny very destructive beetle was regarded as an importation. It was first catalogued as a native species under its old generic name of *Leptidea* by Beare & Donisthorpe (1904); the latest list (Kloet & Hincks, 1977), however, mistakenly marks it as non-indigenous, an error repeated by Harde (1984).

In Europe, *Nathrius* is reported as present in a variety of deciduous and coniferous trees, the majority of which grow here. Many papers about this mischievous little insect have been published.

In this country, the late T.E. Doeg found it last century in numbers in a Gloucestershire orchard (Atty, 1983), but it is not indicated if the beetles came from fruit baskets stacked there or from the damaged trees themselves. It was discovered breeding freely (and in the company of *Gracilia minuta* F. which is not infrequently the case) at Lulworth Cove in osier beds cultivated by the local lobster fishermen.

Nathrius is certainly established in Britain. It has been found in dead dogrose stems from which it was successfully raised to maturity (Duffy, 1953) and in hazel frames and withies (Cooter & Cribb, 1975; Hickin, 1987).

The larva particularly attacks thin growths used in the making of every

kind of basketry and wickerwork, skips, hampers, garden chairs, carboys and the like, besides packing cases, barrel hoops and hurdles — with damaging results. In warehouses where such items are stored its depredations can reduce them to powder.

Metamorphosis lasts two years, pupation taking place in April and May. The very swift-legged adult emerges during mid-summer and may be found either in the open or indoors until August. There is a curious record of its association with the ant, *Formica sanguinea* (Barnes, 1904).

Molorchus minor L.

Generally distributed from the West Country to the south-east, the Home Counties, East Anglia, the central Midlands, Cheshire (only in the north-west) and the north-east as far as Durham. It has not been found in the south-west peninsula nor in Scotland and Ireland.

ENGLAND: BD BK BX CB CH DM DT DY EK EN ES EX EY GE GW HF HT L LN LR MX NE NH NM NO NW OX SH SR ST SW SY WK WN WO WS WW WX.

WALES: MN.

The life cycle lasts two years, the larval pabulum being divided between conifers and deciduous trees, namely, dogrose, holly, larch, Norway spruce, osiers, rowan, sallow, Scots pine, silver birch, silver fir and yew, whose exposed roots and dead or cut branches are attacked. The larva is parasitised by these Hymenoptera:— *Cleonymus depressus* F., *Helcostizus albator* Thunb., *Vipio nominator* F., *Xorides niger* Pf. v. *bicolor* Grav. and *Xylonominus gracilicornis* Grav.

The pupae form in late summer during August and September; they overwinter, the beetle ecdoding in April. It is found in the open until August (there is a very late October record) when it frequents brushwood, sawmill chippings, brambles, dogwood, hawthorn blossom, hogweed and other umbels, *Spiraea*, the branches of firs, pines and the Service tree.

***M. umbellatarum* Schreber**

The much rarer and smaller of the two species, with a less disseminated distribution that is confined to the Thames and Hampshire basins, the Severn area, and parts of East Anglia and the Midlands. Still unknown in the Principality and north of Yorkshire.

ENGLAND: BK BX CB DT EK ES GE GW HF HU L LR MM MX MY NE NH NM SH SR WK WO WS WX.

The larva is found in the trunks, slender or broken off branches and dead twigs of brambles, crabapple, dogrose stems, guelder rose, Scots pine, Snowy Mespil, spruce and fruit trees. Its Hymenopterous parasites are:— *Ephialtes messor* Grav., *Perithous divinator* Rossi and *P. septemcinctorus* Thunb.

Metamorphosis also lasts two years; the pupa overwinters and the perfect insect ecdyses during the spring. It is a localised beetle which frequents crabapple, dead hedgerows, dogwood, hawthorn, hogweed and various *Umbelliferae*, privet, *Spiraea* and wild rose from May until July.

Both *Molorchi* are figured in our earlier English entomological publications (Martyn, 1792; Curtis, 1824).

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***Philonthus atratus* (Gravenhorst) (Col.: Staphylinidae) new to both
 Worcestershire (v.c. 37) and Gloucestershire (v.c. 33)**

Philonthus atratus (Grav.) is a rare, striking, hygrophilus beetle. On 1.viii.1987 I made my first acquaintance with it at Beckford, Worcestershire (SO 93) at the margin of a shallow pool on glutinous, entirely unvegetated clay. Disturbed from beneath a stone, it ran rapidly, with its body well elevated on scarcely flexed legs. At about the same time *P. atratus* turned up at another site near Broadway, Worcestershire (SP 03) on organic mud at the edge of reedswamp.

On 15.vi.1989 *P. atratus* was again observed at the Beckford site, where incidentally, on 24.vi.1989, an inland *Bembidion minimum* (Fabricius) was encountered. Finally *P. atratus* was observed in Gloucestershire on 4.vii.1989 on minerogenic mud by shallow pools at Bishop's Cleeve (SO 92). It is noted that all of these records relate to basic water bodies flanking the Jurassic scarp of midland England. *P. atratus* demands further study due to its specialised ecology and preference for a habitat that can be lost with dramatic speed. Its sporadic occurrences hardly constitute populations, and it may be that it is dispersing from more major foci elsewhere:— P.F. WHITEHEAD, Moor Leys, Little Comberton, Pershore, Worcestershire WR10 3EP.

[I have heard that *P. atratus* occurred freely over a number of years on the muddy edges of a pond at the Welsh Harp, Hendon, Middlesex, up to about 1940 when the habitat became unsuitable or more likely was destroyed. Only sporadic later finds are known to me, from Compton Bishop (N. Somerset), and the New Forest.— A.A.ALLEN.]